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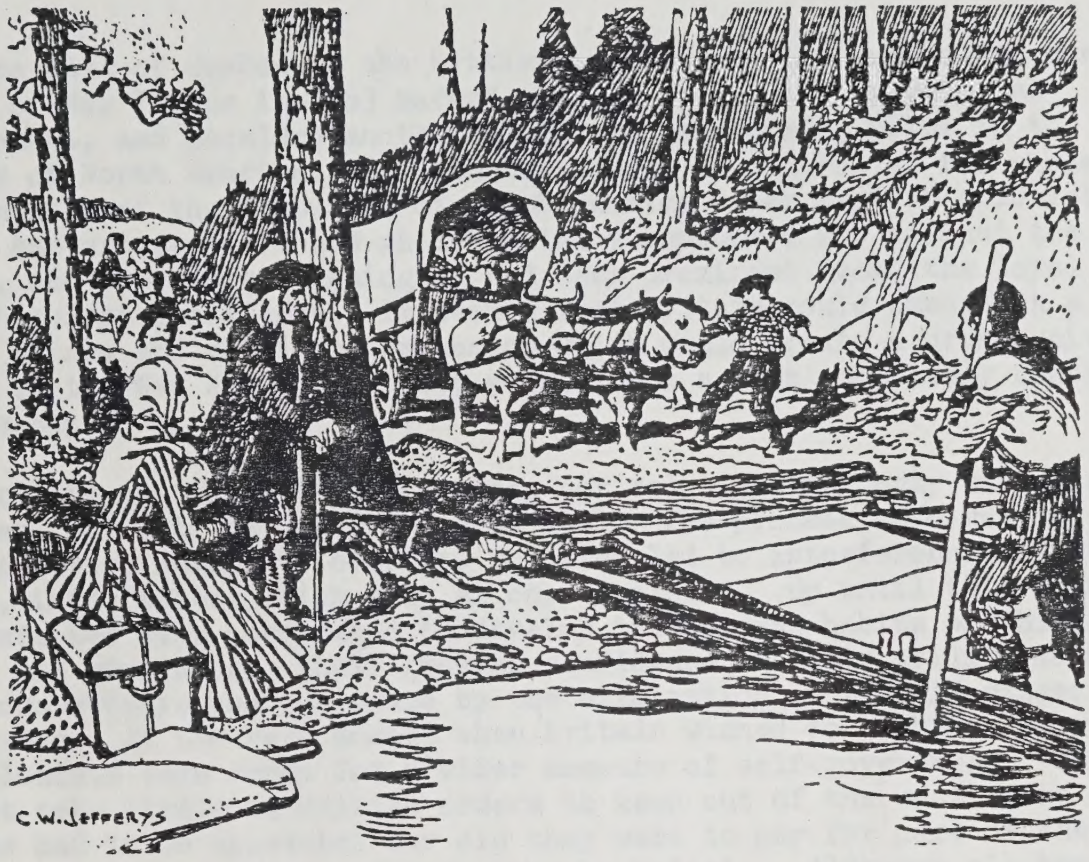

LOYALISTS MOVING TO THEIR NEW LAND

CANADA AND AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

Canada and the American War of Independence

The fall of Quebec to the British in 1759 and the subsequent surrender of New France in 1763 marked the end of one era of colonial development, and heralded another which was the turning point in the history of North America. Britain was placed in control of the whole eastern half of the continent of North America. Her English colonists on the eastern seaboard had wholeheartedly supported her against the French, and one George Washington had been prominent among the loyal British colonial officers. It seemed that Britain could embark on a policy of new and confident expansion which would create a great united empire in the New World. In fact events took a turn completely contrary to this hope.

Britain was faced with adjusting her relations not only with her new colonies, but with her older ones as well. The process of directing a more effective authority over the colonies led to interference with the people, interference which they at once resisted. Up until this time the colonists had been encouraged to develop independent habits of thinking, acting and governing. Their growing confidence in their ability to handle their own affairs was increased by the elimination of the old danger from New France. At the very moment when Britain wished to tighten the reins, the colonists were ready for a wider measure of self-government. They did not take kindly to British orders to keep out of the west where the Indians had to be appeased; nor did they want to pay for part of their own defense out of taxes imposed upon them by Britain. Although all the taxes were one by one withdrawn in 1770 because of the violence of colonial opposition, the tax on tea was left by Lord North as a symbol of Britain's authority. In 1773 violence suddenly erupted through another imposition of British authority again regarding the import of tea, and a group of radicals disguised as Indians boarded the British ships in Boston harbour and threw the tea overboard. Stern reprisals followed this act of lawlessness, and the colonists took up the cry of "No taxation without representation". Many influential British people supported them: men as unlike as Edmund Burke and John Wilkes argued their case in England, while Thomas Paine who had moved to America, published "Common sense" in 1776, a very influential book which urged complete independence. The thirteen Colonies had never had a central government, but in 1774 they sent delegates to a "Continental Congress" in Philadelphia. Here they renewed the boycott on British goods and took over direction of military affairs. Active fighting began in skirmishes in 1775, and 1776 saw the Declaration of Independence.

Events in Canada in 1774 furnish an interesting contrast to those in the Thirteen Colonies. Just before the meeting of the Continental Congress, the Quebec Act had been passed in Canada. As Governor Carleton was convinced that Canada would remain French "to the end of time", he urged that the loyalty of the populace be obtained by satisfying their leaders, the clergy and the seigneurs. This was the object of the Quebec Act, which confirmed the seigneurial system and granted full rights to the Roman

Catholic Church, including the right of tithe. It introduced English criminal law but left French civil law in force. Instead of creating an elective assembly, it vested power in a governor and elected council on which French Catholics were allowed to serve. The English merchants were displeased, but not sufficiently so to join the revolting colonies. And when the Continental Congress asked the French Canadians to assist them in their struggle against the British, the Americans foolishly tried to belittle the concessions made to the French by the Quebec Act. They also lavishly praised the French for their "gallant and glorious resistance" against the conquerors. This approach was somewhat negated by the fact that, only five days before, the Congress had published An address to the people of Great Britain, in which the British government was reviled for its concessions to "a religion which has deluged your island in blood". French Canada, therefore, paid little attention to the appeal to join forces against Britain.

When words failed, the Americans decided upon action. In the autumn of 1775 a force under General Montgomery advanced by way of Lake Champlain and captured Montreal. Another under Col. Benedict Arnold set out through the wilderness of Maine to attack Quebec City. The two forces joined in an attack on Quebec but the small garrison under Sir Guy Carleton held out until British reinforcements arrived in the spring. Carleton was able to drive the besiegers from Canada, and this ended the struggle for the fourteenth colony.

The part of the Loyalists in the war

At the outbreak of hostilities, the Loyalists were not organized for warfare, and no Loyalist regiments were formed until 1776. Many of the Loyalists were not in complete sympathy with the policy of the British government. No doubt, too, the conservatism which made them hold back from Revolution made them also hold back from taking up arms, at least until the British authorities provided some kind of military organization for them. The course of the Revolution would have been quite different had the British government and army understood the advantages of deploying colonial troops who understood both the terrain and the temper of the enemy Burgoyne's early successes were largely due to the skill with which he used his Loyalist auxiliaries. In the later stages of the war, in the few British successes, the native troops outshone the regular army. Of particular interest to Canadians are the raids made by Sir John Johnson and Colonel John Butler from the Canadian border.

The Johnson family is perhaps the most outstanding of all Loyalist families. Sir William Johnson as superintendent of Indian Affairs in New York, and brother-in-law of Joseph Brant, the Mohawk chief, had particular influence over the Six Nations. He served with great distinction in the Seven Years' War against the French, and died on the eve of the American Revolution leaving his title and immense estate to his son, Sir John. Just before his death, Sir William Johnson had interested himself in schemes for

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the colonization of his lands. His two main classes of immigrants were Germans and Scottish Highlanders. The latter had no love for the Hanoverians, being in many cases Jacobites; but their lack of sympathy for American ideals and loyalty to their new chieftain made them King George's men in the New World. When Sir John Johnson learned that he was to be arrested because of royalist sympathies, he fled to Canada taking 300 of his Scottish dependents with him. He was soon followed by the Mohawks under Brant, and hundreds of Loyalists who immediately joined his "Royal Greens", as the King's Regiment was called. They were the nucleus for almost every border foray until the end of the war.

These men settled the north shore of the St. Lawrence between Montreal and Kingston. As more Loyalists flocked north, other regiments were formed, including Butler's Rangers, who settled the Niagara district after the war. This body of irregular troops who adopted the Indian method of warfare were accused of atrocities by American historians, with considerable justification. There is no doubt that the Indians and Loyalists on at least one occasion killed defenseless people in a border raid employing tough guerilla tactics; but it is equally certain that Washington and the Continental Congress made overtures to the Indians and would gladly have used them in the same way. The powerful Six Nations confederacy were, however, mainly royalist through allegiance to Sir William Johnson, Sir John Johnson and Joseph Brant.

Joseph Brant, Thayandenagea, the Mohawk chief, is another famous Loyalist. Probably the best educated Indian of the day, he could write a good letter, as the example in the exhibition shows. He made the first translation of a book of the Bible into Mohawk in 1774, and assisted in preparing the Mohawk Prayer Book. Joseph Brant first assisted the British against Pontiac when the western tribes rose in 1763. By throwing his considerable weight and influence on the British side, he was able to insure that his Mohawks were Loyalist. After the meeting of the Continental Congress in 1774, Brant and Col. Guy Johnson, Sir William Johnson's son-in-law, made the necessary appeals to the Indians and removed themselves to Canada where they could organize forays against the Americans.

Brant probably saw ocean-going vessels for the first time in Montreal, and in 1775 it was arranged that he visit England. Here he was treated with great respect, and had an audience with the King, for whose person he felt a great reverence. Among those who entertained him was the ubiquitous James Boswell who wrote an article about him for the London Magazine and had a drawing made of him. During the same period Brant was persuaded to sit for George Romney, one of the foremost portrait artists of the day. The resulting fine portrait is now in the National Gallery of Canada. There is no doubt that the attention paid to Brant further cemented his allegiance to the Crown.

Returning to America as the war with the colonies became imminent, Brant was given the rank of Captain and fought throughout on the British side. He is often blamed for some of the more lawless border raids, the infamous Cherry Valley raid in particular. His part in another raid has been a subject of controversy for years, chiefly because it was made known

to the world through a poem by Thomas Campbell, Gertrude of Wyoming. This highly unhistorical poem describes a raid made by Butler's Rangers and a band of Indians upon the settlers in the Valley of the Wyoming. This area, lying between Connecticut and Pennsylvania, had originally belonged to the Six Nations, and they were keen for vengeance on the American settlers. As the 500 attackers approached, the militia of the area, 800 strong, advanced to meet them. Thus the old story of defenseless civilians being massacred lacks credence, though without doubt some unprotected people were killed after the battle. Joseph Brant's son, John Brant, was so upset at the account of Joseph's part in the slaughter, that he visited Campbell in England in 1821-2 bearing proof of his father's absence on the day of the battle. Campbell, who was greatly impressed by the younger Brant, wrote a lengthy statement which ended: "The name of Brant... remains in my poem a pure and declared character of fiction". This note appeared at the end of all subsequent editions of the poem, but the poem, of course, continues to appear unchanged.

After the war, Brant was to lead the Mohawks to a new home on the Grand River, now in Ontario. Brantford is named in his honour. Another Mohawk settlement was founded on the Bay of Quinte.

The coming of the Loyalists

Of all those who had opposed the Revolution in the Thirteen Colonies, 80,000 to 100,000 fled or were driven from their homes. They were dispersed widely: to the British Isles, the British West Indies, Nova Scotia (which then included New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) and Quebec (which included Ontario). Nova Scotia and Quebec received a number variously estimated at between 34,000 and 40,000. This large migration, completely unforeseen at the beginning of the Revolution, changed the course of Canadian history. It not only increased the population but altered the racial balance in Quebec. It caused the creation of several new provinces, and brought representative government to the Canadas.

Nova Scotia was the first province to receive a large body of Loyalists. When the British army left Boston for Halifax at the beginning of the Revolution, about 1000 Loyalists came with them and small groups followed. The largest migration, however, was just after peace was declared in 1783. New York and the surrounding area became a rallying point for those who had lost their property or had been persecuted. Sir Guy Carleton, then British commander at New York, wrote to Lord North: "It is utterly impossible to leave exposed to the rage and violence of these people [the Americans] men of character whose only offence has been their attachment to the King's service". Carleton saw their safe removal from New York by ship. As Nova Scotia was the closest area offering free land, and moreover had been sparsely settled by earlier American colonists, over 30,000 Loyalists moved there at once, drastically altering that province. In 1784 New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island were formed. Cape Breton Island also became a separate province, until it re-joined Nova Scotia in 1819. The British

government, having finally grasped the plight of these homeless people, gave assistance: half-pay to the officers, free land for all, lumber, food and clothing to help them over the first difficult years. This merely lightened their distress, and could only begin to compensate for their terrible losses. Most Loyalists had lost everything and came away literally with the clothes they were wearing, perhaps carrying a single precious object. They had suffered terrible humiliation and loss ever since the Declaration of Independence, ranging from the delightful custom of "tarring and feathering", to fines and imprisonment, maiming, and, very rarely, loss of life.

The Loyalists coming to what is now Ontario came in almost all cases by land from Vermont, western New York and western Pennsylvania. Col. John Butler, Sir John Johnson and Joseph Brant brought groups with them during and after the Revolution to form colonies at Niagara, on the St. Lawrence just west of the Quebec border, and at Brantford respectively. It was after peace was declared that the mass immigration began. The bulk of these desperate refugees were settled by Governor Haldimand assisted by Sir John Johnson on land between Montreal and the Bay of Quinte. Haldimand fought whole-heartedly to assist them, sometimes ignoring orders from Britain when he considered them impractical, but even so the settlers fared badly - worse than the Nova Scotia or Brantford groups. For lumber to build with they had to await the construction of saw-mills; instead of ploughs they had at first to use hoes and spades - and then there were not enough to go around. However they were given coarse clothing for 3 years and tools to commence their struggle against the wilderness. Each family received an axe and a hand-saw, though by an error they were given short-handled ship's axes, hardly suitable for work in the impenetrable forests which surrounded them. To every 2 families were allotted a whip-saw and a cross-cut saw; to each group of 5 families was supplied a set of tools consisting of chisels, augers and draw-knives and one fire-lock "intended for the messes, the pigeon and wildfowl season". Seed wheat was sought by Haldimand, and small portable grist-mills, worked by hand, were distributed among the settlers until proper mills could be constructed. Many of the newcomers had lived in pioneer communities before their removal to Canada and were ideally suited for the rough existence. By 1791 the settlements on the St. Lawrence and at Niagara had been swelled by a steady trickle of people, often the families of those who had escaped earlier. It is reckoned that over 10,000 settlers had come to the Canadas by this time, some of very interesting racial backgrounds. The Mennonites, for instance, came because they felt they had been ostracized as pacifists who had refused to fight in the American War.

The political consequences of the immigration are of tremendous importance. As has been noted, in the Maritime province of Nova Scotia, three new provinces came into being in 1784, the largest, New Brunswick getting an assembly at once. In Canada, solid North American newcomers, accustomed to representative government, would never be content with the Quebec Act. The result was the passing of the Constitutional Act in 1791. It provided for the division of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada, which made it possible for the French to keep the privileges they had gained

under the Quebec Act, while the English in Upper Canda were freed from the seigneurial system and from French civil law. Both provinces were given elective assemblies, which the Quebec merchants had long been requesting. Each province had a lieutenant governor, and an appointed council. The church was looked to as an institution of stability, and land reserves were provided for the support of a Protestant clergy, with the idea that Protestantism should be encouraged to balance the position granted to Catholicism under the Quebec Act.

Under Governor Simcoe, a proclamation in 1792 offered free land to any settlers who still wished to cross the border. This brought on a second wave of settlement which continued strongly until 1810. There is no doubt that many people came for practical reasons. It has been estimated that by 1812 eight out of ten people in the province of Upper Canada were American by birth or descent, and only about one fourth were Loyalists. When the War of 1812 broke out the Americans hoped for a good deal of help from these later settlers, but almost none was received. Perhaps the new settlers found that "Peace, Order and Good Government" offered as much as "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness".

Exhibition: Mary Garvie
Rachel Grover

Text: Rachel Grover

Artifacts loaned by staff of the
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Canada and American Independence

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Proclamation, 1792, offering land in Lower Canada.

Marriage licence from Upper Canada - 1796-99.

Preliminary document relating to a deed of land to be granted to Lieut. Wm. Fraser. 1787.

Crown grant to Anne Smith

Crown grant to Elisha Alger

A receipt for supplies for His Majesty's forces. 1798.

Document appointing Richard Pollard Sheriff of the Western District.

A.L.S. Moses Hazen

A.L.S. Joseph Brant

A.L.S. Sir John Johnson